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RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY 2951  
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI PRIORITY 9529  
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RUEHOT/AMEMBASSY OTTAWA PRIORITY 0821  
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RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO PRIORITY 2111  
RUEHCG/AMCONSUL CHENNAI PRIORITY 6556  
RUEHBI/AMCONSUL MUMBAI PRIORITY 4467  
RUEHON/AMCONSUL TORONTO PRIORITY 0033  
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 COLOMBO 000650

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SUBJECT: NORWEGIANS STILL TRYING TO BROKER DEAL AS APRIL 24  
CEASEFIRE TALKS POSTPONED

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Classified By: Ambassador Jeffrey J. Lunstead for reasons 1.4  
(b) and (d).

11. (C) SUMMARY: LTTE told the Norwegians they cannot attend ceasefire talks in Geneva until transport is arranged for their leaders to attend a Central Committee meeting. Contrary to what the Tigers told the press, the Tigers did not insist on other conditions for talks. Norwegians are still trying to arrange transport by private helicopter. Tigers seem resigned to being designated as a terrorist organization by the EU. SLMM head says neither side is ready to return to full-scale combat. Japanese propose Co-Chairs meeting in Tokyo end-May to discuss future direction for group. END SUMMARY

Tigers Need Central Committee Meeting Before Geneva  
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12. (C) Norwegian Special Envoy Jon Hanssen-Bauer briefed Co-Chair Chiefs of Mission April 20 on his attempt to keep the April 24-25 Geneva ceasefire talks alive. Hanssen-Bauer was accompanied by Norwegian Ambassador Brattskar and new Sri Lanka Monitoring Mission (SLMM) Head Ulf Henricsson. Hanssen-Bauer had visited Kilinocchi that same day to discuss a GSL proposal that the Tigers utilize a private helicopter company to move their Eastern commanders to the Wanni for a Central Committee meeting--a Tiger prerequisite before going to Geneva. Hanssen-Bauer said that the planned April 24-25 meeting was definitely off, and that the Tigers had focused on the necessity of having their Central Committee meeting before deciding whether to go to Geneva. Tiger leaders had told the media after his meeting that they would not go to Geneva until "normalcy" was restored, but they had not made that demand to him.

13. (C) Hanssen-Bauer said he had been very angry at the GSL that morning. The GSL had said the private helicopter transport was all arranged. He was then given a document from Sri Lanka's only private helicopter service which asked the Norwegians to post a \$2 million bond, assume liability for any mishaps, and agree to compensate the company for any future negative effects, including possible lost earnings! This had now been straightened out, with the GSL agreeing to take all responsibility, but it had taken an extra day to do so.

14. (C) The Tigers told Hanssen-Bauer that they preferred transport by Sri Lankan Air Force helicopter. Failing that, they would accept sea transport in their own Sea Tiger vessel, and, as a last alternative, could accept a civilian helicopter, although they had reservations about their security. Hanssen-Bauer consulted with the GSL upon his return from Kilinocchi and they had asked him to return to Kilinocchi the next morning (April 21) to try to nail down the transport issue. The GSL also pressed for a rescheduled Geneva meeting before the end of April.

15. (C) On substance, Hanssen-Bauer said that he had pressed the Tigers hard on all issues, noting that the continuing violence was creating a difficult situation. The Tigers replied that they were committed to the ceasefire, but they were under pressure from the Tamil people to take up arms. Therefore they needed to bring their Eastern commanders to the Wanni for a Central Committee meeting where they could take a decision on whether to go to Geneva. Hanssen-Bauer said that the Tigers had accepted an EU terrorist designation as inevitable. They said they had expected the international community to respond positively after they had participated in Geneva I. They told Hanssen-Bauer there was now "very little reason for staying within the limits of the international community."

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16. (C) After all the discussion, Hanssen-Bauer said, at the end of the day it boiled down to the Central Committee meeting. In response to Ambassador's question, Hanssen-Bauer confirmed that the Tigers had not said that if the meeting were held they would go to Geneva. Rather they had said that if they were able to hold this meeting, they would then decide whether or not to go to Geneva. Brattskar added that the Norwegians would go back to Kilinocchi because they had to find out if the Tiger recalcitrance was just due to technical issues, or based on broader questions.

Neither Side Ready for War  
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17. (C) New SLMM head Henricsson said that in his opinion a resumption of large-scale combat was unlikely as neither side was ready. The LTTE did not have enough men after the Karuna defection. They might be able to mass enough force to take some territory from the GSL, but that would leave them vulnerable to counterattacks and loss of other territory. The Sri Lankan forces, Henricsson said, were "poorly trained, poorly motivated and poorly equipped." The field commanders he had met definitely did not want to resume fighting. He added that the Tigers were losing ground to Karuna in the East and were very worried about this.

Co-Chairs End of May?  
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18. (C) Japanese Ambassador Suda said that Tokyo would shortly propose that the Co-Chairs meeting originally scheduled for April 24 in Tokyo be rescheduled for the end of May. He understood that Norwegian International Development Minister Solheim would be in Tokyo May 27-29 for a meeting, so a Co-Chairs meeting could be scheduled around that. This would be a chance for the Co-Chairs to do some long-range thinking about the future direction of the group. Consensus of the

rest of group was that a May-June meeting to discuss future of group would be useful, but that an earlier meeting to discuss the current situation needed. Hanssen-Bauer said that if Geneva II happened, a Co-Chairs meeting afterward would probably be useful. If Geneva II did not happen, a meeting would be urgent.

COMMENT

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19. (C) The Tigers seem willing to drag this process out indefinitely, while the GSL gets more and more edgy. If the transport issue is finally resolved, we would not be surprised if the Tigers at their Central Committee meeting find yet another reason why they cannot go. Henricsson's assessment, if accurate, means that we are most likely to see a continuation of the current low-intensity war, rather than full-scale combat.

LUNSTEAD